




Aubade

The Mary Washington College Review of Arts and Literature



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Aubade 1999



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poetry, prose

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Lucy's

The bar's a straight up
Juke joint dive
With license plate walls
And intermittent Christmas lights.
Smoky and dim,
Highlighted with steady flashes
Of green and red
Zippo orange,
Butane blue,
And the gold flecks
Of goldenschlager.
A rowdy crowd hollers
As it life's the miracle
Of intoxication
And the waitresses,
Darlas and Mary Sues,
Keep the pitchers full
And the wings hot
With warm whispers
Of "Hey there, Sweeties"
And "Sugar Pies"
As they jiggle
Their well worked thighs.

But removed for that sweaty heap
And into the band
Is this guy at the back wall
Undisturbed by those undeterred
By the bar top's last call.
He wears socks and sandals.
Bermuda shorts,
And a tank top
With a faded print.

Five o'clock shadow
and 12 o'clock hair.

Delta blues
Draw a collective groove
And that guy in the back,
His head bobs like a dashboard ornament,
His fingers snap,
He lurches front to back
To a sweet E beat.

Bouncer,
Ask that man
If he could please leave.

Ty Bowers



"Fairy Ring"

Black & White Photo

Cynthia Lotze

Chandler's Blue Tulip

is now duct-taped to the wall in my bedroom,
as she let me take it back so I wouldn't miss her.
It's a blue that is actually just white paper reinvented by
bright watery swirls of her little messy hands,
but this is not to deny its subtlety
besides, the stem is dull green construction paper.

Lying in bed among bouncy candlelight shadows
you venture to say the two paper cutouts of hands
which make up the leaves resemble your own,
as if creating the blue jagged head
like shadows atop shadows
like playful hands biding time in empty spaces

like me that hot afternoon
as we stopped on the corner of Kenmore and Monroe
was it for those yellow-red tulips
or was it just that low brick wall
low enough to sit on so you could read the chapter
for class that you hadn't read,
and wouldn't be able to read on time,
and so I sat some distance down the brick and
in between mutual efforts at interrupting one another,
composed a list of things we'd seen,
things we hadn't,
and took advantage of reflected light not cast
in crude finger shapes of self-amusement.

Must I actually choose which I prefer:
the perfectly reddish tulips in the corner of that yard;
yours, imagined in some dim afterglow; or her sweet
paper blue on the wall,
name and dated: Chandler, May '98

Sarah McCall

Letter to A.

We were not a unit.
We were not permanent—but
—more like a butterscotch candy
that you hold in your mouth after eating lots of Altoids
so it tastes kind of weird.
So anyway we glanced carelessly a couple times
at next to each other
and you smiled a fuzzy smile
and goosebumps popped out of my skin
like prairie dogs—
ever polite you asked if i would mind
if you smoked
and small white hands
carefully fingered the cigarettes
one by one—
painting smoke trickles in the air in
precise Chinese teacup strokes.

My guard was going up and down
like an elevator and my
smile was porcelain cracking as we
lay on the bed
side by side
like two cigarettes—
everything got paler and paler.
We were slowly fading
under the wash poured on the easel.
I was all prairie dog and

hardly any blood.
odd—that—
i don't remember
any of our conversations—
which must have trickled into the air
as we smoked each other away, and that
i wrote this at all
when
i know that i don't care
and i know that you don't care
(and surely no one else will care)
about cigarette-paper-wrapped things
that happened
before i was me.

Meg Weireter



Untitled

Ink on Paper

Erika Meredith

Kinetic

I left on your arm.
My sobriety played navigator
through a cosmos of elbows,
and a firestorm of drunken barstools.
Your sure hand like a rudder steered
intoxication, charted movements
by the night sky as we embarked on a maiden voyage.

My engines flood.
Inundate deltas—our bodies, your bed;
it's a barge of consequence.
We idle on this platform for days:
bounce around like spacemen,
drive lunar cruisers with monster-truck wheels
and digging threads,
set off rockets that fishtail my spine—until;
the pull of gravity or tides release me.
And dewy tire tracks mark our sweet awakening.

Somewhere between dawn and morning
I will sleep. Dream of the next five hundred years
and what advancements will be made
in space travel. The horse and cart,
the motor car,
the raft and ocean liner.
Jetsonian rockets.
You will always be the only vehicle that moves me.

Laura Varlas

College Life (or Zip Zang Zoom)

In six parts

- I. "foot reflex action"
sittin in my room,
room of doom,
yup
it's a room of doom.
- II. "devil"
i am the devil
of that light
at the corner of william and princess anne
- III. "dawson's creek"
DAWSON!
- IV. "eagles nest"
sometimes I wish
I could smell
my armpit
(up close)
- V. "luke perry"
he's so hot,
i am not
luke perry;
he is lean,
he is mean
on my heart,
luke perry.
groin.
- VI. "classical music makes me vomit"
classical music makes me vomit.
No, not really
(i actually kind of like it)

Adam Berenbak



"Self Surreal 77"

Graphite on Paper

Michael McMahon

Saturday

Our eyes were searchlights that Saturday,
your glow like sunlight & I singing
along to some 80s number,
trying to dance, my smile a watermelon.
Just breathe. Music moves your blood.
Finally something sultry
crept into the speakers, & I bowed,
begging a dance. You asked if He would mind.
I asked if She. So we didn't answer
& gave arms, & our hair stood on end.

The music didn't love us, though. So we found
a bus, & were silent, our breath simulating sleep.
Selene was beginning her farewell address
& our eyes weighed us down.
You offered yourself as a pillow,
but when I looked up all I could see
was Her. So I wrapped a smile, gave
it to you, & tilted backward my seat.

Movement rolled the scenery. I said
something about love & there She was again,
explosions of your eye. You turned words inside out & asked of Him.
(We don't use names; those make Them real.)
I told you I was waiting. For a break,
a moment, a lifetime. I'd wait
years for a five-minute thrill.

When all was sleep, we arose & trailed
string through the maze of sidewalk.
If we got lost, we would never fly out,
or like Icarus, we'd find flight fateful.
We played the pronoun game, discussing
Us, & She, & Him. Now we really danced,
but eyes were deceitful. They were chained.
I wanted to say *I know*,

me too. But I didn't. I just smiled.
The stars had us spoken for.

We found a concrete place stained
with orange lamp light. I sat,
crossed my legs, dress obscenely
short on my right thigh. We spoke
in past & future tense. They polluted
our conversation thought, so instead
of speech, we dashed
through artificial rain & made
sand castles from our word.

I got my feet wet in the man-made lake,
you followed. The sign said no
swimming, but the water begged me to
heap clothes together & disobey
everything that bound my life: signs,
strings, solitude, sex. Instead I asked you
if you liked where you stood.
You didn't answer. I didn't offer.

Time took us away from Saturday.
It returned us, checked us back into
Routine. the fantasy was repainted
into fiction, a moment of energy, sleep-laden
bodies, starving.

But we're full now. With He & She,
& wait, & memory. Full to our
watermelon smiles.

Our eyes, still searching,
our hair still on end.

Erin Smith

southern hospitality

so i say to myself
i sure do like that easy going smile of yours
and how the dust just clings to every inch of your work worn body
the casual way you say "you know i love you, baby"
while you eyes flicker mischievously like the flirt
your non debutante mama taught you to be
and while you light that cigarette
leaving it dangling in those sculpted lips of yours
i swear to myself i'm leaving you
cuz that southern drawl which you whisper
sweet nothings to me with is slowly losing its appeal
and i can only take so much of this land of civil politeness
honey your southern hospitality is just as sweet as candy
and everybody knows that sugar simply
dissolves

Shannon Carnemolla



"The 42nd Psalm" Acrylic on Paper William Hartland

Familiar Discontent

"I had no business raising children"
says my father as we huddle indoors.
It will drop to 20 degrees tonight he tells me.
First signs of winter, first signs of
his disappointment.

Gray hair, heavy middle,
he just turned 46.
We both stare outside, waiting
for the younger 2 to get home.
It's dark and cold.

Immediately I want to tell him the truth.
That his music still makes me move,
I still dance in my yellow dress to the blues.
And I'll keep searching for comfort;
I'm moving south.

I've saved all of his letters:
About his scarce dinners at Robinhood Apartments.
To remember, as Henry Miller said,
"always be merry and bright"
Be focused. Be thrifty. Be good.

I shiver next to the icy window.
"We gotta get you a winter coat,"
he reminds me—
Then he pulls me tight.
"I just want you to be warm baby, that's all."

Colleen Blue

The Legend of Clippy the Squirrel: A True Story

James Mirabello

Listen well, friend. I see that you are new to this neighborhood, and I can sense your naiveté. Allow me to remedy that failing. Hear me! There is much treachery and adventure in the frolicking backyards of these suburbs. Be not fooled. They are a wilderness of wonder, and it is these suburbs where my story is set.

I will tell you the tale of a woodland creature, one who surpassed all the limits of his species. I speak of a single squirrel who challenged our thinking and made us see nature in a new light. You cannot live on this block until you hear this tale so pay attention. I will tell you the legend of Clippy the Squirrel.

No one knows from where this squirrel came. Of his birth and early life, I know nothing. But when he arrived at the backyard of my father, Robert, immediately humans could tell that this squirrel was different. He was larger than the average squirrel, though not by much. His body was sleek, but powerful. You could see his muscles working like an engine underneath his gray coat. Behind his eyes was intelligence, and that's what was most interesting. In general, when a man walks close by, all squirrels scurry off to the safety of their trees. This particular squirrel would back off a bit, but then sat...and watched...Yes, those were the eyes of an observer. He watched.

His most noticeable feature was a cut in his ear. It was almost as if someone had snipped at the squirrel with scissors for halfway up, the ear diverged into two little branches split at the middle. Robert Mirabello said this was a clip in his ear and dubbed him 'Clippy.'

There was peace in the land at this time. For years, man had put birdfeeders in their backyards. These feeders proved an impossible temptation to the squirrels who constantly frightened the birds and attacked the feeders. This was, a familiar was in suburbs around the world, continued for a long time. But, man was more clever than beast. Man hung their birdfeeders in places where the ravenous squirrels could not get at them. For example, my father had a great lattice fence on one side of his deck. The ancient dwellers of this house had wanted to build the lattice fence all around the deck, but only finished the one side. Now, the wood was old and rotting, the gray brown underneath overwhelming the last vestiges of the blue paint. Robert Mirabello used this ancient structure, which extended eight feet into the sky, as a defensive tool, and he hung the birdfeeder from the top of this fence. And that brought the peace to the Mirabello backyard. It lasted for many years.

In these years, the squirrels had to content themselves with nuts and whatever

se they could find. But, they would look up and see that great birdfeeder and its
ock of wonderful seeds. Many tried to climb that lattice work, but all failed. The
rdfeeder became a dream, an impossibility, a sword in the stone.

And unto this sad peace came Clippy, with his sleek gray coat and his knowing
es. He tried to climb the lattice work and like all the others, he fell with a forceful
ud on to the deck. But, unlike others, he did not give up. The rogue's advantage
as always his intelligence and his observations. And he saw a tree branch extending
ver the top of the lattice work.

Robert Mirabello was walking to the backyard one day when he looked up and
w the rogue squirrel hopping from the branch onto the lattice fence. The squirrel
en trotted over to the birdfeeder and ate to his content. He stood there, eight feet up,
champion, a conqueror, his clipped ear flapping in the wind. And the war began.

My father was a professor of defensive military strategy, and these skills were
aid him verily. His first attempt to defeat Clippy was simple enough. He took a
ope and hung the feeder a foot from the top of the lattice fence. The rogue easily
astered this. He crawled to the edge of the lattice work, planted his feet firmly into
e corner, and flipped backwards. When the Mirabellos discovered Clippy, he was
anging upside down from the top of the fence, reaching down and eating seeds. He
so was knocking food down to the deck where a legion of anxious squirrels awaited.

Mirabello next built a long, narrow metal plank which he attached to me end of
e fence. He hung the feeder from that. The ploy was brilliant. The metal plank was
o narrow for the rogue to hang upside down from, and he wouldn't be able to grip
e strong metal.

The scheme may have been canny, but Clippy was too sly. He nudged himself
refully across the metal plank, and sacrificing his body, threw himself over the edge.
n the way down, he rammed into the feeder, knocking the whole structure down with
m. Then, he and all the squirrels would eat until they could eat no longer. And they
joiced.

For years, the battle raged. Like a modern day Robin Hood or Owen
endower, Clippy the Squirrel would break through every trap that was set, every
uzzle that he was presented with. His magnificent gymnastic abilities also served
m well throughout the war. This skill went beyond hanging upside down or falling
urposefully eight feet in order to feed his brethren. Clippy could leap farther and
gher than other squirrels. He had quicker reflexes as well. (These skills particularly
oved vital when Jon Clough, friend of the Mirabello family, scout and squirrel
nter, tried his luck against the rogue. But, that is a story unto itself.) But, what man
ared most was Clippy's intelligence. He would be eating on the deck and suddenly
chased away by angered children. The children would pursue him into the back-
rd and smile for their victory, turn around to go back in the house, and see him
ere, eating on the deck again!

The battle raged, the two sworn enemies, the rogue squirrel Clippy and Robert Mirabello. The battle grew famous, and it was at this time that I first heard of it. The war was raging and man was losing. Losing to the intelligence of a simple squirrel. Clippy was single-handedly making a case for evolution.

The years passed and the two enemies grew old and tired. My father had tried every defensive trick he could think of including hanging the feeder on a line that ran from the gutter to a tree. However, Clippy jumped from the house, knocked the feeder down, and somehow landed gracefully on the tree. But, as Mirabello's ideas ran out, so did Clippy stop coming to thwart these ideas. The squirrel disappeared. No one knows where it went. Peace returned.

A year later, Robert Mirabello threw a piece of bread out for the birds, as is a usual custom. This piece of bread had peanut butter on it, however, so the birds did not want it. But, hopping onto the deck was an old squirrel who trotted weakly over to the bread. Picking it up and holding it like a newspaper, the old squirrel began to lick the peanut butter off. The Mirabello family all thought this was adorable, but then my father saw the familiar slice in the ear. The old squirrel was Clippy. He looked weak, his muscles tired, his body battered by years of flying into walls, falling into decks, and ramming into feeders. Behind each of his ears, fuzzy patches of white hair were growing, like little cotton balls. But, as old as he looked, the squirrel was still powerful. You could see it in his eyes. The intelligence. The brilliance. Clippy had returned.

Instead of chasing his old enemy away, my father watched and smiled. It was as if he missed his old enemy. And a new habit was born. Everyday, the Mirabello family would put peanut butter on a slice of bread and place it on the deck for the aging squirrel to eat. And Clippy would wait on the deck. Even when man opened the door, he sat and waited. He transgressed the rules of animal kind and did not run in the face of man. He stood there and waited as the bread was placed in front of him. And he ate.

Sometimes, he would leap onto the window sill (an easy jump) and start scratching on the screen. He wanted us to know he was there and that he was hungry. I myself was reading in the living room once when I heard a knock. I turned around and looked at the glass door that led to the backyard. There was Clippy, knocking on the glass like a man.

Once Clippy poked his head inside the house when the door was open. The young Suzanne, the daughter of the lord of the house, screamed and ran around like a mad woman. Clippy skittered away and never tried to venture within the house again. This was not because he was scared. On the contrary, he was thinking only of the young girl. After that, he stayed always a foot from the door when it was opened.

Clippy grew closer and closer to the family. He began to time his visits so that when he arrived, he could eat this meal with us, him on the deck, and we at the dinner

able. But, he would look in and watch and feel comfortable. As we left, he left.

The bond was especially strong between Clippy and my father. The two old enemies were growing old together and became companions. If someone was on the deck when Clippy was fed, he would bring his meal elsewhere. Unless, it was my father. They could sit together on that deck, calmly and happily. When Clippy knocked on the window, the man would cry out like a child on Christmas, "Clippy!" With the speed unparalleled by man, he would smear the bread with peanut butter and dash outside to be with his companion.

But, wait, friend. The story has another interesting note. I must share with you Clippy's greatest battle. Young upstart squirrels were migrating throughout the neighborhood, transplanting the old from their homes. Times were changing and there was much violence on the block as squirrel battled squirrel, young battled old. The aged were losing. A great battle was fought in the Mirabello backyard, one that included Clippy. I do not lie when I say that I looked out the window during these dark times and saw eight or nine squirrels flying across the backyard, flinging from trees and wildly clawing at each other. Tails were flickering with rage...and the battle was great. The old lost and fled. But, Clippy refused to leave.

One day, he crawled to the window and knocked. He was hungry. Robert Mirabello got him bread and went to the back door. Clippy met him there, looking weak and tired. One half of his clipped ear was hunching over meekly. His back had a great cut on it, a battle wound from one of the upstarts. It was healing well and looked clean, but the pain was bothering the once mighty squirrel. My father sadly gave him the bread and returned inside.

Suddenly, like lightning, they attacked! Two upstart squirrels leapt onto the deck, batting Clippy away like a doll and began to ravage the bread. Clippy's strength was failing and he retreated. Or did he?

Clippy's advantage was always his intelligence. I was sitting at the front porch on this day, and I suddenly saw a squirrel run from the backyard and fly by me, and turn to the backyard from the other side. With the wound on his back, it must have been a great struggle to run as he did, but the will and anger are motivators beyond comparison.

It occurred like this. The upstarts charged Clippy who retreated. He ran around the house, returning to the backyard from the other side, passing me, and running for the unsuspecting interlopers. Suddenly, from behind the upstarts, the old rogue squirrel had time only to turn around before he was pummeled. It was like a train plowing into an automobile. The upstart squirrel rolled back and meekly stumbled away. Clippy returned to his bread, held it up like a newspaper and began to lick what was left of the peanut butter. Both halves of this clipped ear were standing tall, lush with pumping blood and adrenaline. You could see the fire of victory in his eyes. He was the old Beowulf battling the dragon, only unlike that Geat hero, Clippy survived the



"Pepe"

Ink on Paper

Erika Meredith

battle. His back healed. The upstarts never bothered him again.

But, that was the last great adventure of Clippy the Squirrel. For many months he continued to scrap on the window or knock on the door, and eat this dinner as we ate ours. But one day, he did not show up and we have not seen him since. We do not know where he went. We do not know why. But, I warn you, my friend, do not think him dead. He returned once. He may yet again. Just know that this squirrel was more clever than man, and fought man, defeated man, and found in his old age that he could live peacefully with man. He was not of squirrel kind. He rarely involved himself in their world. Instead, he found himself intrinsically linked to the affairs of man, and it was here that he made his home. He transgressed the rules of nature, you see, and he may yet again. Do not think him gone, he will return like Arthur from his Avalon...

Family

A scarf and a hat where there had been
Hair shining the color of Shenendoah
leaves in fall

Linda made my mother promise
Always to take care of them for her
the boy a little younger than the girl.

But that is not my memory
I only see
my mother and Linda laughing
under yellow plastic umbrella-shade
Alternating sips of their piña-coladas
with bites of the crusts, left over
from our peanut butter sandwiches.

Megan Sheils



"Business Man" Oil and Wax on Canvas Becky Flynn

Stockholm

Running mouth darting with
insinuation & two bodies facing
one another in oblivion-
To these keys of joy of madness
seeping in tonight
I feel a force of hand
penetrating from the open window
face flushed burning & whatever
else can be imagined here
& I'm straight with this
at least to myself, thinking
I need to at least write everything down-
Wide bright morning coming
through this livid dreamscape
& I believe in a heaven of small favors,
smiles & that press of hand &
I believe in this lunacy of music
that breaks the air every night
covering the haunting moans of lovers

Chandra DasGupta

Should Have Worn Corduroy

Laughs, music, and the stench of cheap beer
You spun
You sang
You poured out to him
And I listened
You kissed
You danced
And I listened
He laughed
He whispered
He kept his heart in the back pocket of his jeans
But they were at home
Thrown over the back of a chair
His heart Safely hidden

This morning he fills you up
Dominated your thoughts
You wonder
You hope
And he tries to remember your words, your name
He hurts you
He forgets you
And I write you poetry
I sigh
I ache
Last night I wore my favorite pair
I know
I checked
It's gone

Derek Coryell

Sleep Secrets

Observe sleep—
and the crisp shrill ee
tucked in between quilts of slippery gelatin sl and
a p soft with lips closed
like a lullaby
(lips is a word very like sleep
though wetter and fatter
and a fruit warm like an overripe blueberry)
Sleep, though,
is a pear.
Observe a dark juicy dreamless sleep—
smileless and motionless—
of him
who
lies

under crimson sheets and blankets
his lips a small open pink ellipse—
slowly he breathes in the darkened room
sip it
like a fine port

and savors the flavor in his throat.
Breath comes in silent solemn ihs and ahs
(not an ee to be heard in this room)—
sleep pillows his breaths
and wraps them like treasures
in silk—they are sacred relics
to adorn a temple.

I dreamed of him sleeping
and it awoke me
in a languorous slither.
My own breaths came wrapped in chintz.
(his, sometimes in miniver or velvet)

I remember every breath of his.

I keep them in a shrine, locked behind a golden door.

I lay in the darkness-fog
and shivered,
missing the sound of fruity pillow breathing
trickling through eh silent warm thick darkness
of crimson sheets
and the hands that occasionally
plucked fruit from my cheek.
I missed it.

He sleeps the way a conch shell whispers an ocean,
his secret wafting like orange tea
from his lips
all the way to my bed.

Meg Weireter



"Reaching" Colored Pencil on Paper Michael McMahon

“me + her”

we sit shiny-eyed-pensive
and talk smokily chat
over java cups

(cracked porcelain style)

hers:black
mine: sweet creamie.
she is neat-
i like her smooth mind
and sensitive hands.
quietly loud,
she can soft step barefoot into my into my noisy phase
and peace my heart:

(a slipped crunch multi-red leaf into my hair/a twizzler drooped to me as
understanding)

the callouses on her hands tell her songs-

(she sings sky-down faith. she sings whisper-

breath hope.)

me + her

heavy-drenched with wanting to fly instead
and we fascinate each other:

she dreams in alligators and crashes,

i write in blue hurt on soul-soaked paper.

i wonder if she knows that

i could be content as a maybe-poet

if she could always believe me a sure one

and i would be a crazy success.

she matches in my head

with to-be-taken photographs of her-

squishing dirt like juicy good fruit between her palms,

she says

“i can keep you whole”

(she says.)

laughily smiling teeth-ful into chilled days when the wind hurts,
stooped, comforting, to a needful face - an "i know" in the hands that soothe,
the mind that calms.

her + me

and we go together

with late nights of

stuff-forgotten-remembered because of trust

and candy to pacify the monsters we hide.

she touches her heart,

that is where she keeps her music,

she touches her heart-

"this is where i keep you whole,"

i like me better when she's around.

(i've noticed.)

we sit

as only confessioned-to-each-other-friends can

and through the smoke we comfortably exhale,

into each other's beings

we balloon fattly.

Lydie Kane

Bathpoem.

What does a bubble keep inside of it?
—I wonder, as my plump toes
squirmily pop several of them
(I can feel the bubble essence
spilling over them like slippery vanilla sauce
or come)—

and as my body slashes and squishes
among the bubbles like a
pink earthworm.

The tub encases the bubbles like a seashell.
The bubbles encase the water like a skate's egg sac
and the water encases me.

(the olive in the martini?)

I lie back and watch the bubbles pop,
watch the elusive bubblemagic be freed
to flit merrily far away,
and I squirm and slide deeper into the hot wombtub
wondering where all the shells and skins end
and what I keep inside of me.

(the bubble in the champagne?)

Meg Weireder

Letter

what shall I say?
another summer will be
miserable & that I can feel the
heat's damp palm embracing me
even now in this post-rain early evening.
The night & I are young & tired
in the midst of this oncoming vengeance,
I can feel the torrents of nausea & sobbing racking
even now & haven't even thought
about your mouth in months,
& this is always longer than I
intended & expected & I debate to
say if I really miss you
but I will say that I can still feel you
& maybe that's the same thing

Chandra DasGupta



Untitled

Oil on Luan

Heather Payne

Becoming my Mother

It's in the way I pick fruit,
in the way I smoke cigarettes and drink coffee straight through until afternoon,
in the way I'll occasionally cook breakfast for dinner,
It's in the way I love laundry and clean sinks and the hour when the house gets quiet.
It's in the way I give out sound advice to girlfriends, while ignoring it myself.
It's in the way I write letters long and full of daily details,
and in the way I obsess over receiving nothing but the same.
It's in the way I like the Stones and David Byrne and Ella,
in the way I want to dance on Christmas morning,
in the way I want kids, maybe even six, and to let them make their own way.

It's in the way I don't want to be comforted
when I'm in a bad mood,
in the way I make stories too choppy and trivial,
in the way I repeat myself too often asking, "wait—did I already tell you this?"
It's in the way I have hardened feet from barefoot days on beaches and blacktops and
pine-needled yards, and in the way I have thirsty hands from soapy dishes or
dirty bathroom floors or writing it all hastily down.
It's in the way I'm thrifty in thrift shops but not when I'm out on the town.
It's in the way I read to fall asleep but wake up three times to re-lock the doors.

It's in the way I have to procrastinate, make lists,
pack snacks for long car rides though I'd really rather just stay at home.
It's in the way that I'm bossy and brash, a wiseass, a tough one,
a roll with the punches sort of girl.
It's in the way I care most about a few things and much less about everything else,
in the way that I can't hold a grudge, can't forget to remember,
can't avoid what I'm becoming.

Sarah McCall

Remembering Wynd

The afternoons here
are like mornings - a boy passing
mentions *Much Like London*.

I think of that picture of you,
your thick chocolate hair
horizontal in the clouded breeze.
Stonehenge was colored
in with blue, so small
compared to you. You gave
that picture to me the day
before I rode off into the flaming
north, my world prepared
and packed in cardboard castles.

And I wonder where you are today.
If you are still sitting on that ledge
by your purple window, fingering
the stars with wishes. Or painting
your face for more plays I've never
heard of, playing characters the cultured
would recognize. Certainly
you've given up your drive-thru diva
routine and are about rich enough
to buy a silver car, destroy
your eggshell world, and follow me
north. Or maybe you're still
that ungainly fifth grade girl with glasses
you refuse to wear, sitting on the swing
reminding us that we're too old to be
here. We should be stars
with planes and men. I'll write,
you'll act, and we'll move into an old
English
castle with stone sidewalks and rose
trellises.

Maybe you've cut that cinnamon hair
on a whim, as you did last March,
so I could run my fingers through it
but once, before skin. Maybe you're still
the same girl I left, going through life
as air through autumn limbs. But mostly
I hope you've become so large
that you've forgotten about me, and the
swings,
and perhaps even Stonehenge. Because
you were too old for all that. And I,
well I am just becoming
too young.

Erin Smith

byrdie

I.

her real name was _____,
but they called her "byrdie"
because when she was 5
her father bought her a picture book of birds for christmas.
she liked their colors
and the way their wings spanned the pages.
"don't you love that one, darling?"
she sat with her legs tucked underneath
he pointed to a cockatoo over her shoulder.
"that one daddy,"
she showed him her favorites:
past the exotic and tropical ones,
the last page -
hummingbirds.
she liked their smallness
and believed they sang real songs with words.
in her dreams,
they came to her
and perched on her ponytail.
they beat their tiny wings against her hair
when they wanted attention.
delicate and fragile,
they sang to her -
pretty words in their songs -
they whispered to her of princes and beauty,
magic spells and rose petals.
"what's this daddy?"
she held up the little red note left with the package
she found on her pillow when she came home from kindergarten.
he took her hands and pulled her onto his feet -
"you're my pretty girl"
he read into her gentle blue eyes.
the gift was a tracing pad and colored pencils -
"to draw the hummingbirds in your book."
he let his hand slide down the length of her hair.
"my sweet byrdie."
she'd never seen one before but always looked -
"daddy, do hummingbirds live in new york?"
he laughed, "byrdie"
and told her that the man who would love her
would buy her a hummingbird and a great big golden cage
he hid his arms behind his back,
made a quick shuffling movement -
they reappeared as two tight balls held out to her.
"pick one" -
she placed a tenderly pudgy finger to her lips,
made her eyes wide and chose the left one.

he opened it slowly
revealing the shimmering silver foil of a hershey's kiss -
"and the man who will love you will buy you these on valentine's day."

II
at 9,
her body changed before all the other girls in her class
at night,
she lay in bed on her back -
palms pressed against her small hard breasts
desperately trying to flatten them.
a ritual -
always ending in soreness and tears.
she undressed in her bedroom before showering
walking to the bathroom nude
until the hot in her face throbbed in waves
when her mother caught the flash of a strand of black hair
from the corner of her eye
she felt her arm pulse
as her mother's nails threatened to dig further in to her skin,
"you need to start wearing a robe,
you're not a little girl anymore" -
a strange voice hissed.
from the bathroom door,
she turned to see that her father had turned his back -
and she remembered the hummingbirds.
she kept the picture book in an old shoe box under her bed.
she traced them on her comforter
with a silent controlled mania
on the foggy car windows,
on the carpet,
on the dinner table
on her desk at school.
not artistic -
no one would ever guess what they were
they looked like upside down bananas with legs and human hands for wings.
a boy peered over her shoulder in math
to catch her drawing one in her notebook.
"what's that supposed to be?" - spat at her
"a hummingbird"
and the shame rushed in fast
"it doesn't look like one!"
he made fun of her in gym
along with some other boys the chanting began,
"byrdie's' got boobs!"
it echoed and she went someplace far.

(the little red notes kept coming on valentine's day. she read on her own, "for my pretty byrdie")

III

in her head a tunnel grew
and it did not go sideways
but up and down
a long, dark pipe shape
with sticky black walls.
wide enough to fit a girl -
not too fat
but not thin either
when she was 12,
she slipped and fell in.
it had something to do with the boys playing handball -
they had mean eyes
and fast, hurting words
they watched her through the holes in the fence.
she hated recess -
she felt fat and uncomfortable in her skin.
the boys called her ugly
and told her that an old drunk man
who smelled like piss
was going to rape her.
in the tunnel of her head,
she sat closed
at the bottom -
a hummingbird in her lap.
the pretty girls were at the top -
they were the ones the boys touched,
she wondered how they looked in the shower,
knowing that even the water did pretty things to them -
sliding off of their cool bodies in smooth adjectives.
it splashed and made noisy irritating words off of hers.
from the bottom,
she watched them with eyes that wanted
her head down
and tried to move the way they did.
she knew that she belonged at the bottom
but hoped that she could be a "one" there -
the one who if you took a picture of in black and white
would have beautiful hair that made you remember rose petals -
but in the tunnel,
everything goes dark,
there is no sound
except for the pretty girls laughing,
the boys shouting
and a hummingbird cannot sing.

(the little red notes appeared on her pillow. she opened the bag of kisses, unwrapping each one. a pile for chocolate. one for foil. one for the flags. counting. she couldn't remember when her father stopped writing, "for my pretty" ...)

IV

In high school,
 the tunnel in her head narrowed
 and she felt the walls
 press against her arms
 holding her legs
 she rocked slowly
 twirling a strand of her hair and sticking it in her ear
 she watched the pretty girls at the top
 and they knew she stared with jealous eyes.
 she saw them with boys
 who wore baggy pants
 they were the boys who moved like marbles on a wooden floor
 and kept their hands hidden in their pockets -
 she thought of their black hands and where they had been on those fluid white bodies.
 "you will meet someone wonderful,"
 her mother told her
 one day when she asked why the boys didn't like her.
 but she knew that was an excuse -
 it was because of how she ate with swollen hands
 and her body was too big and her eyes had not sex in them.
 the box with the picture book of birds
 was tattered now,
 and shredding at the corners.
 the page with the hummingbird had torn from the seam.
 she still drew them in her notebooks
 and a pretty girl had given her a picture of one for her locked
 she had cut it out of national geographic -
 but as she taped it to the inside,
 the tunnel getting smaller for a moment -
 she heard the pretty girl whisper
 "I gave that weird girl byrdie a hummingbird picture -
 i feel sorry for her
 and the guy that marries her -
 she's crazy"
 she fell loudly
 and knew that there
 is where she had to stay.

(this time it was "to byrdie" only with a p.s. of "don't eat all of them." she unwrapped the
 kisses, foil down first, then flags, then the chocolate pile. she couldn't remember when she stopped
 eating her kisses on valentine's day)

V

he smelled like fast food and cigarettes.
 when she was 16,
 3 weeks before valentine's day -
 she went to a dance
 wearing too tight clothes

and too much lipstick.
a girl belonging to the bottom
obviously trying to be a pretty girl
she stood in a corner
watching them grind against each other
watching the boys who moved like marbles
and their black hands
slide up and down their bodies
in time with the bass.
she didn't see him come up behind her
but felt the sweaty lips against her ear -
"dance with me" -
she turned to see black hands come out of pockets
and wrap around her waist -
something inside her dropped
and fell heavy
as his hands pushed her shirt up an inch
he was on her skin.
she moved with him,
letting the smell of him and his touching
go slowly in her head
so she could be sure to remember -
she saw herself sticking to the sides of the tunnel
clinging, halfway to the top
she let him feel her
and press into her back -
before it was over,
he said "i'll call"
and gave her a pen and a blank piece of paper to write down her number
she did
and told him her real name.

VI

She called him her boyfriend
and he did not call.
and thought about his hands on her skin above her belt
and telling him about how her father gave her a bag of hershey's kisses on valentine's day -
she wondered if now he would be the one to give them to her.
the phone rang on valentine's day
and he told her to be there in an hour -
he had a present for her.
on the subway,
she wondered if he would touch her skin again...
outside
was a dark empty place
with buildings that looked like tight, closed people.
it was dirty there
and smelled like urine and fast food
in front of his building
the boys that moved like marbles stood in a group

watching her with their hands in their pockets
and smiles like pointed fingers.
he opened the door and was on her before she saw his hands.
he led her to his bedroom
and pushed her down onto a mattress stripped of the sheets
on her back,
she thought about him touching her
and decided to.
he would be the only one...
his mouth open
coming at her
and the tunnel rushed back in.
from the bottom,
she looked out the window -
hoping to see a hummingbird.
instead
rusted bars and a broken screen.
he never said her name
or gave her hershey's kisses for valentine's day
she held her legs to herself in her head
and was gone.

(they forgot this year. when she came home, instead of the little red note on her pillow with the candy,
her mother had found her drawings of hummingbirds and left them scattered on the floor. "you're too
old to keep doing this!" written across her favorite drawing)

VII
they remembered the next day.
when she came home from school
she found the little red note
"to byrdie -
still a pretty girl"
love dad.
she sat on her bed in the tunnel
and opened the bag.
one pile for foil
one pile for chocolate
one for flags
she counted
thinking about the boy who did not make her feel pretty
and waited for the hummingbirds.

Lydie Kane

MINOR KEYS

Who you calling Minority?
Me?? A minoriteeee?? I don't think so!
Don't degrade me. I'm not minor in any way.
Cono, I'm a Fighter, Writer,
Lover, Hater, Sweetheart, Time Bomb,
Brown, Proud, a little bit Loud, Learner, Earner,
Thinker, No Stinker, Street Cool, No Fool,
a Poet. I KNOW IT!!!
Never call the children minor.
If you call them minor, they'll act minor.
If they act minor, they'll become minor.
If they become minor, they'll die minor.
If they die minor . . . THEY'RE LOST!!!
A lost child. Think of the price!!!
Like the wisdom my *amigo* Piri flows on me,
I'm a majority of *uno*
I take shit from no one.
I'm second to none.
That's it. I'm done.

Warren Duffie Jr.



Untitled

Oil and Wax on Canvas

Becky Flynn



"Campaign Wife" Oil on Luan Heather Payne

Down in my Sister's Basement

My Sister hands me a Coke and a worn Afghan
and we settle down
content in her basement
apartment as she pours over old
adolescent journals.

I wrote this when I was your age, she says:
“Sadly, you will never understand that
I belong in black and white and you are so beautiful in color.”

At 13, I am bold and heady, my heart still safely in one piece so
I beg her to keep reciting and give them all to me in some shiny
new volumes to safeguard, like heirlooms
Adorning the dusty shelves and cheap furniture
that mother would hate - for each time we leave the place
Mother reminds me of her preference to
“floral patterns over thrifty mildew.”

But I like the taupe and orange couch that we're sitting on,
complementing
the crocheted throws, and glossy ceramic
dancing figurines. Half-primed Christmas
ornaments like abandoned children
I wonder if she'll finish them on time.

Frames of every size and color cover the dark-paneled walls
Flowers in black and white
Come to life, I can imagine them in color.

I tell her
She should sell the one of her by the ruins of Mexico
because there's something about her face:
Her eyes are wide and not squinting, her smile
For once doesn't seem forced.
Even mother likes it.

Next week my sister's starting law school.
Mother claims she can finally sleep and
I'm worried they'll be no more movie nights, or
Late night talks, or new photographs
and so is my sister.

So tonight she reads,
saying there won't be much time
for all this later
so listen.

Natalie Illum

The Necklace

You feel her hand brush across you
Her fingers curl and close around you
Lifting you up from the box
Stretching you out over her hand
Your links falling over
As she takes you by your ends
And places you around her neck
Fastening your links
As you become part of her

She places her hand over you
As you lay against her warm skin
Following along the curve of her neck
Down to the depression between her breasts
You lay against her smooth skin
She looks at you in the mirror
Reflecting the light of her blue eyes
You shine forth
She runs her hand through her blonde hair
And pushes down her black dress
As you and your mistress
Slip through the door

Jason Hickman

Charade

As the young couple,
so young and so happy,
ducked into the waiting car,
I lowered the curtain
and ended it all.

I'm the talk of the town
and I never knew why.
Perhaps because I ran
instead of walked.
Merrily, I went to Hell
and as a result,
I have lots of favorite wives.
And I have room for one more.
Of course, people will talk
because they always do.

I'm the toast of New York
but in name only.
Ladies never listen to the awful
truth that by the time
the bartender ends the day
I am on that stool,
a drink in one hand,
a cigarette in the other
and these my only companions.

Was I indiscreet? Am I notorious?
It made no difference. They wanted
the charm. They wanted
the wit. They wanted
me and I gave
myself to them.

I gave
them my pride and I gave
them my passion.

I gave them me.
a devil in the deep
and they have all left me
to my soliloquy.

I have grave suspicion
that he takes off his mask
only to reveal the same beneath,
a mask of such gray
that I can't see the fading remains
of the mixers, the black and white
the night and day.

Where is the line? Where do I end
and where does he begin?

Everybody wants
to be Cary Grant.
I want
to be Cary Grant.

James Mirabello

Lounge Singer

She wore blue
velvet Bluer
than velvet was
she with a
sad smile
Rich red lips drawn
down to me
In the night black
crept over her shoulders

I sat at a small
table sat
with gin and my lonely
She didn't see
me but I rewound and watched
over and
over

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